

Duxbury Clipper, Thursday, April 26, 1973



Peterson Parsonage takes its name from Sarah Peterson who bequeathed it to The First Parish. She was the widow of Elisha Peterson, longtime undertaker in Duxbury. It was often referred to as a Brewster house and generally thought to have been a long time in that family, indeed built by a Brewster.

When the house was remodelled for a parsonage workmen uncovered a beam with a chalked inscription "Built in the days of the Great Storm of 1832." With that date and the Brewster tradition it seemed that dating the house would present no trouble. Research confirms the date but the builder is a real surprise, a man who moved out of Duxbury, leaving no record here beyond a brief connection with this property.

Who was the owner in 1832? The story starts a few years earlier when Captain Gershom Bradford and Enoch Freeman owned all along the east side of Tremont St., from Harrison nearly to Depot St. In 1817 Enoch Freeman sold a piece of land abutting the Bradford land to Judah Loring, 110 feet along the road and 97 feet "by my shop lot" and the price was \$30.

Judah Loring was a carpenter and used the shop mentioned, enlarging it and extending it across the line onto his newly acquired lot, or so it seems. He never married and when he decided in 1828 to move to Maine, he sold his land "together with my part of the shop standing thereon, it being 20 square feet on the ground" to his brother Daniel, for \$150.

Daniel was an enterprising man. He started out as a painter in Duxbury, married and went to Braintree, and was in Quincy when he bought his brother's lot and shop. Because of the date on the beam, we grant he built the house in 1832, but whether he built from scratch, or enlarged the shop into a house, is not easily determined. It seems more likely that he built a small house and some subsequent owner moved the shop on as an addition. There is no way to determine whether Daniel ever occupied it as a residence, but if he did, it was for a very short time, for he was a trader in Gardner, Maine, in 1836 when he sold his land and buildings to Celia Sampson for \$400. Celia was a "single woman" according to the deed and some years later bequeathed it to her sister Dolly, "unmarried," as it was the home of spinsters from 1836 to 1845. Hannah Alden, widow of Captain Briggs Alden, was the next owner. She had several married children and perhaps 2 still at home. She soon bought a strip of land on the south side of the lot, including a building which was perhaps part of the shop Judah Loring had, or the one Enoch Freeman mentioned. At any rate, she moved it on to her house, so that by 1847, when she sold part of her lot, the south part, to her son-in-law, Caleb Moore, the dividing line ran right through the house, "northwest in a straight line through the house to the first bound, being 97 feet," and she concluded the deed, "designed to include that part of the house in said bounds."

At Hannah's death, 1850, Caleb Moore bought the north half of the lot and house from the administrator of Hannah Alden's estate. It is not uncommon to find a house divided between 2 owners and while they were generally relatives, there is at least one house in Duxbury where for more than a 100 years 2 unrelated families

owned the 2 halves.

Caleb Moore sold to Nathan Brewster in 1853. Nathan and his wife Abigail lived in the William Nash house on Surplus St. and their son, another Nathan, probably lived in the Tremont St. house, although it was never in his name. Abigail outlived her husband and son, and sold in 1890 to Elisha Peterson, who had

married her granddaughter, Lucy. It was the long years of Brewster ownership, 100 years if you count the grandson-in-law, that led townspeople to think it had always been a Brewster house and Brewster built.

Elisha Peterson was active in many town affairs, had a barn and carriage house for his horse and horses, kept the place up well, and added considerable acreage to the back of the original lot. It was his second wife, Sarah, who bequeathed the property to The First Parish for a parsonage. She lived to an old age and was alone in the house for many years. She made no changes and kept the old ways of living. The house construction shows the several different stages, from the small original structure through the additions and moved on buildings, so arranged as to present an unusual but interesting house. One evidence of the several parts is the 2 sizes of windows visible from the street and another is the many roof angles and levels. It is an interesting old house that Daniel Loring built "in the days of the Great Storm of 1832."

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## DATE BOARDS

The stories on the old Duxbury Houses which have been appearing in the Clipper for the past four weeks, are the result of research by the Duxbury Rural & Historical Society. These appear from time to time as the researching by members of the Date Board Committee is completed on a group of houses.

M. Alexander Pratt  
Chairman